CHAPTER TWO

ESPIONAGE IN OTHER ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS

Espionage has been an age-old shield for human existence and its strong presence can be traced way back to the past when man lived through harsh times with constant threats to his security from the fury of Nature and uncivilized hordes. Nature was thus worshipped for appeasement and the need for a safe social, moral and ethical Order emerged. Our ancient seers and poets have upheld the need to protect this order in public life through the ever watchful spies of the gods. Ancient Indian treatises starting from as early as the Rgveda, are found replete with references to the practice of Espionage in its varied forms and functions. These literary sources are valuable links to the evolution of Espionage and its role in civilization.

Literature reflects the norms, values, customs and ethos of contemporary society and culture. Concurrently, it also influences and shapes social relationships, activities and events, serving as a powerful means of social control. Espionage finds wide mention and appreciation in Ancient Indian literature right since its earliest beginnings in the Rgveda to Classical Sanskrit poets and
playwrights like Kālidāsa and Visākadatta. After its earliest expressions in the Rgveda, ancient Indian treatises like the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Purāṇas, the Manusmṛti, the Yajñavalkyasmrṭi, and others have deliberated on the art of spying as a necessary adjunct of public administration and urged kingship to use it extensively for human welfare. Kauṭilya perfected this ancient tradition to mould it into an indispensible instrument of governance; an art that continued with varying degrees of enthusiasm and insight even after Kauṭilya. The genius and uniqueness of Kauṭilya lies in his systematic and emphatic codification of all scattered thoughts on this subject and development of the craft of espionage into an organized instrument for ensuring a Welfare-state.

The antiquity of spying in India can be traced to the Vedas. The Vedic Saṁhitās, which contain the earliest thoughts of the great Indo-Aryan seers and sages, have upheld the institution of Spying time and again. And their thoughts naturally reflect those of their Indo-Iranian and even their Indo-European ancestors.

As Spying comes intuitively to man, he naturally attributed it to the powers in nature which he worshipped. So the Vedic gods resorted to spying at his behest. Thus, Varuṇa, their chief deity, is...
seen here surrounded by spies, through whom he oversees all happenings and protects all. He appears imposing and powerful in his majestic golden robe with his spies seated around him.

The spies of Varuṇa are described as “stars of the night” and the “beholders of men.” A prayer to Agni implores the all-powerful God to send forth his spies to protect mankind from evil. These fleetly spies are urged to ignore the influence and deception of evil forces, near or far, and shield the devotees and the sacrificer from any impending trouble.

Another verse praises and thanks the benevolent Vedic Gods, Mitra and Varuṇa, for overseeing all happenings on the wide earth from the lofty heavens and deputing his trusted spies amidst the plants in the fields from where they visit all spots and watch unceasingly.
Macdonell and Keith⁷ opine that a verse invoking the Adityas reflects on the possibility that spies could have been used in war too. As men lead horses in conquest of forts, so are the Adityas urged to lead their spies to conquer enemies.

Varuṇa, deified as the divine counterpart of the human king in Vedic India, was believed to depute spies for detection of crimes amongst Dasas (slaves or aborigines) and Daśyus (robbers). The natives or aborigines of India were called Dasyus by the Aryans and differences of thought, culture and rituals often triggered strife and aggression, which were resolved by the Vedic Gods after ardent appeals and invocations. In one particularly fervent appeal, the seer describes the Daśyu as ignorant of rites, void of sense, inhuman, keeping alien laws and surrounding the Aiyans. Indra, the Slayer of foes, is implored to baffle the weapon which this Dāsa wields.
Indra is also variously lauded and beseeched to subdue such Dasas or even godless, atheist Aryans who were foes of the invoker and easily conquerable by Indra’s spies.

The spies of the gods collected information regarding the activities of inhabitants of inimical tribal settlements. They were also assigned the duty of guarding the fields and the crop. Varuṇa is assisted by Sarama, the dog, who detects cattle stolen and hidden in a Vala (enclosure) by the evil and wily people called Panis and rescues them. Sarama may also signify a spy who was deputed by Indra to keep track of cattle, the valued possession of Vedic Aryans and the bone of contention in many conflicts. Sarama is depicted as flying to the ends of heaven in search of the stolen cattle, which will never be surrendered without a battle with sharp weapons.

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Sarama is mocked at by the Panis who boast of their rock-cave which is their treasure-chamber; filled full of precious cattle. They are watchful keepers who guard this priceless cattle and jeer at the futility of approaching this lonely station.

सारांम संसे अन्तिमव्य गोभिरह्यांसि स्वस्विन्यश्च।
रक्षन्ति तं पण्यो व सुगोपः रेकु पदमलक्रमः जगन्थ॥ १२

Sarama may also refer to an agent who detects all wrong doing and reports to Varuṇa. Indeed, there are no secrets that Varuṇa cannot fathom. The Rgvedic seers believed that Varuṇa knows everything through his spies, the flight of the birds in the sky, the path of ships in the ocean, the journey of the distant travelling winds, and beholds all secret activities. No creature can wink without him, and he witnesses truth and falsehood. ¹³

Varuna is of wide vision. कदा क्षत्रियं नरमा वर्णं करामहे ।
मृठीकायोरुच्चक्षसम् ॥ १४ and this vision is through his thousand eyes.
आ च पशो नदीनां वर्णं उग्रं सहस्रक्षसः। ¹⁵ His all-encompassing Knowledge is based on this vision. He knows everything because he sees everything and is lauded as “Visvavedas” (the all-knowing).
Mitra and Varuna also have spies who see everything and cannot be deceived. They are committed to their duties, never confused and have clearly defined objectives. Encompassing both worlds with their spies, Mitra and Varuna are given high dominion by the joyful and relieved Gods.

अग्नि के दुर्गो दुर्गी स्पष्ट अद्व्यासो अमूर्तः ॥

Agni is often addressed as Duta, i.e., a messenger or an envoy of the mortals to the Gods, requesting them to come to the sacrifice. Indra has spies and is himself referred to as a spy sometimes.

इन्द्रः स्पष्ट वृत्ताम परस्य नो वर्णः ॥

Surya, the Sun god is sometimes depicted as an observer of the universe who drives away darkness. He is invoked in the wee hours of the morning as the Lord of sure mansions, whom the devotees, constant to their object, believe to be made to drive away darkness. They worship him, The Sun-god, as one who beholds the universe, and whom seven strong and youthful Coursers carry forward.
Surya is praised as the eye of Varuna with which he looks brilliantly upon the busy race of men.

Soma, the amenable moon god, too had spies. His widely restless warders never closed an eye and were active everywhere.

Even moral offenders could not escape the watchful gaze of these spies. Thus, a fearful Yama rejected the offer of incest from his twin sister, Yami. Repenting the sinful desires he had experienced and apprehensive of exposure and punishment from the spies, the sentinels of God, who stand not still and never close their eyelids, Yama rebukes his twin sister as of wanton nature and implores her not to entice him. She can hasten like a chariot-wheel and go to meet another admirer.
A particular verse hints at the preference of the priestly class for spying assignments. It is believed that Varuṇa’s spies, sent forth upon their errand, survey the two world halves well-formed and fashioned. Wise, holy and skilled in sacrifices, they are the furtherance of the praise-songs of the prudent.

This passage signals clearly that only the Brahmins, who held the exalted position of priests in Vedic society, were wise, holy, skilled in sacrifices and the furtherance of praise, could act as spies. They were considered to be empowered to work for public welfare, dispel evil and report any wrong-doing. They enjoyed the faith of the common people who were highly indebted to them for their existence and progress.

Gradually, however, as the settlements grew in size and number, an organized system of spies evolved where recruitments were carried out on a larger scale and were opened up to other castes and classes as well. References to this effect are seen in the Kautilīya Arthaśāstra and Baudhā Jātakas.
In the *Atharvaveda*, the spies were eulogized as constantly vigilant and watchful, sharply observing all directions. Moving about cleverly and tirelessly, they gathered correct information to report to their master. These spies were mainly associated with Varuṇa who was invoked in earnest to get his blessings for proper and efficient spying. It was believed that Varuṇa’s spies have a thousand eyes i.e. a thousand means, to look through the world to detect the harmful enemies of king Varuṇa. Even if the enemy flies across heaven and beyond that, he cannot escape the lustrous venerable Lord.

उत यो धामतिसर्पात परस्तात्र स मुच्याते वरुणस्य राजः ।

दिव स्याः प्रचर्तीदमस्य सहस्राश्वा अति परत्यति भूमिम् | 26

The *Atharvaveda* depicts Varuṇa as the omnipotent and mighty King who sees through all that is between heaven and earth, and all that is beyond. He has counted even the winking of men's eyes. As a winning gamester puts down his dice, Varuṇa establishes the laws of the universe.

सर्व तद्राजा वस्त्रो वि च चशे यदन्तरा सोदसी यत्परस्तात् ।

संख्याता अस्य निमिषो जनानाम्यामात्मिव श्रुत्ती नि मिनोति ताति | 27
Even if one were to flee far away from heaven due to strife, Varuna would still find him, believed the Vedic Aryans. Varuna, they worshipped as one who caught and punished liars and criminals, but protected the truthful. Varuna’s countless shining nooses symbolizing his spies seem to have bound the liars with a hundred fetters but spared the honest. The unrighteous person was also punished by Varuna’s curse, his watery belly hanging loose like an unbound sheath cut round about.

The Atharvaveda also lauds the Rudras as having spies, who never close their eyes and are present everywhere. Sweet-tongued, exhaustless, they have sent their voices down together in heaven’s vault that pours a thousand streams. These wildly-restless warders are actually snarers who stand to bind evil men fast.
A similar verse praising Soma, the moon-god, as the benevolent controller of swift-moving spies who reside in heaven but come down to earth to keep vigil, occurs in the Rgveda. Clearly, the institution of spying was a very important and active part of Vedic society and administration.

In the Rgveda and other Vedic texts, some more terms like Duta and Prahita are mentioned for such officers who reconnoitered enemy country and monitored internal and external security of the kingdom. According to Macdonell and Keith, Dūta acted as a messenger or envoy. In the Rgveda, "dūta" was a simple envoy carrying messages but with the passage of time, he became more specialized as an official handling diplomatic communications from one king to another, much like an ambassador. Sāyana interpretes Dūta as a representative of the king, collecting secret information about the enemy while deputed to foreign lands. The Prahita was a representative of the Secret Services, the actual secret agent or spy working at the grass-root level to collect information as to the strength and position of the enemy’s forces, alternatively called the Cara or Spaśa.

All these testimonies clearly show that Espionage was well in use in the Vedic age. Crimes like theft, burglary and highway
robbery were common and the king employed trained men to find out thieves and restore stolen cattle. In the period of the later Samhitas, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas and Upaniṣads, the system of espionage became more organized and well-defined. With the expansion of empire and increase in administrative jurisdiction, population and territorial rivalry, the functions and powers of the government were becoming more complex and comprehensive. More officials and secret agents, of high levels of integrity and efficiency, were needed. The Taittiriya Samhita included “courier” in the list of Ratnins (jewels) of the king’s entourage which consisted of the Brāhmaṇa, the king, the chief queen, the favourite queen, discarded wife, the suta, the senani, the gramini and some other important officials.\textsuperscript{33} The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa enlisted the “Palagala” (courier), forerunner of the Duta (sasanahara), in the list of Ratninanihavimshi i.e. ‘Jewels’\textsuperscript{34}.

In the Yajurveda, among various classes of men like fishermen, hunters, jewellers, baskets-makers, rope-makers, slaughterers, door-keepers, footmen, potters, smiths etc, spies were included as messengers.\textsuperscript{35} New crimes like poisoning, arson, breach of caste rules and decorum, corruption were emerging. A number of courts were established throughout the country to try both criminal
and political offenders. The king, like his divine counterpart Varuṇa, was still the supreme wielder of justice, but as the brain cannot function without the cooperation of the sense-organs, so his efficacy required inter-departmental teamwork of the council of ministers, officials and ministerial staff and the spy network.

The poets, sages, philosophers and political thinkers of this ancient land were a vibrant people, perfectionist and pragmatic to the core. They appreciated the utility of spying for the welfare of the people and accorded an honourable position to the secret agent in the State system. They were upheld as the “Eyes of the king”. The wide acceptability of their significance in public administration made their exploits and endeavours interesting plots of popular literature like Dramas, Epics, Bard-Songs, One-act plays etc. These dramatic and literary works which portrayed intrigues, treachery, fraud, conspiracies, secret killings etc. engineered by spies were watched and read by the masses with great zeal and had these tactics not been actually practiced, the authors would not have incorporated them in their writings. Hanumān’s endeavors as Rāma’s spy in Rāvana’s Lanka has made him a cult-figure or an idol, an epitome of dutifulness and wit, an ideal spy.
Espionage in the Rāmāyaṇa

The immortal epic, which revolves around the noble and heroic deeds of King Rāma, records many instances of practical applications of spying. In the 100th chapter of the Ayodhya Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, Lord Rāma explained many political theories to Bharata in the guise of simple queries. Rama asked Bharata whether he gathered information about the eighteen Tirthas of the enemy state and the fifteen Tirthas of the Home state through his spies.

The eighteen Tirthas were eighteen royal posts of high officials in the monarchial form of administration. These eighteen Tirthas are:

Durgapala (Officer in charge of the fort) 15. Simapalaka (Guard in charge of the borders of the territory 16. Rastrapala (officer-in-charge of Home affairs) 17. Dandapala (in charge of Military affairs) and 18. Dharmadhyaksa (Superintendent of the Court))

The activities of all these officials of the inimical state were to be carefully monitored to prevent any deception and subversion by the king’s spies. However, in case of the Home state, three topmost posts of Chief Minister, Royal priest and the Crown Prince were exempted from this strict scanning. Kautilya, however, allowed no such leniency. On the contrary, he recommends Special Spying against the Prime Minister by Women Spies.

Rāma asked Bharata whether the five man-made troubles and the five-fold trouble-makers could be detected through spies. These man-made adversities were brought about by officials, thieves, enemies, king’s favourites and king himself, when propelled by greed. Rāma also mentioned the ‘Krtyapaksas’ or rebels to the king’s cause, ie. a provoked person, an alarmed person, a dishonoured person and an ambitious person. Again, there were twenty types of monarchs who are not worth-negotiating with: 1. the
king who is yet a child. 2. Aged. 3. Who has been ailing for a long time. 4. who has been ostracised by his own kith and kin. 5. who is characterized by a cowardly attitude. 6. who is surrounded by cowards. 7. who is greedy. 8. has greedy associates. 9. who has estranged his ministers and others. 10. who confers with fickle-minded persons. 11. who speaks ill of divine beings and brahmins; 12. who is extremely indulged in sensuous pleasures and luxuries; 13. who is ill-fated; 14. a fatalist (who believes that all things are pre-determined or subject to fate); 15. who is afflicted by famine and; 16. by military reverses; 17. who often remains away from home; 18. who has numerous enemies; 19. who is in the clutches of adverse times and; 20. who is not devoted to truth and piety. Rama asked Bharata whether his spies were successful in subduing in his own state and encouraging in foreign states these Krityakrityapaksas or rebels to the king’s cause. 38 Kauṭiliya Arthasastra devotes two whole chapters Book I, chapters 13 and 14 on Krityakrityapaksa whose control depended solely on spies. 39

In the Aranya kāṇḍa, Sūrpanakhā, Rāvana’s sister, chides him for not knowing through his spies about the killing of fourteen thousand Rakshasas by Rāma and Lakshmana. It may be recalled that when Sūrpanakhā had expressed her amorous feelings towards

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Laksmana, who spurned her advances, leading to this carnage. Sūrpanakhā, therefore, wishing to provoke Rāvana to seek revenge, points out his ignorance of the plight of his kinsmen due to lack of efficient spies.

अयुक्तचार्य भाष्यां त्वां प्राकृते: सचिवैरुप्त:।
स्वजनं च यतं: स्थानं निब्धं नावबुध्यसे॥४०

Ravana reaches cousin Marica’s abode in Janasthāna and seeks his help in abducting Sītā and avenge Sūrpanakhā’s insult. Marica advocates caution and points out that as Ravana had not appointed good spies, he did not fathom the great Strength of Rāma, comparable only to Indra and Varuṇa.

न नूनं बुध्यसे रामं महावीरगुणोत्तरम्।
अयुक्तचारचपलो महेन्द्रवृहस्पतम्॥४१

The importance of spies for efficient administration was clearly being felt. After Sītā’s abduction and captivity in Lanka’s Aṣok-vātiṅa, Rāvana sent eight super-spies to Janasthāna to benefit from secret information. He instructed these spies to observe Rama’s activities and report important happenings. ⁴² Kauṭilya’s fiery spies are an improvisation on these mighty spies.
In the Kiskindhā Kāṇḍa, when Rāma and Lakshmana reach the Malaya Mountain in search for Sītā, an anxious Sugriva send Hanumat, disguised as a mendicant, to spy on their intentions. Rāma, praises him as a good ambassador of the monkey king, Sugriva. He also enumerates in detail the qualities of an efficient ambassador, referred to as the ‘Prakāshācara’ The functions of spies and the ambassadors are often found overlapping one another in the Rāmāyaṇa and Hanuman himself in his tour of Rāvana’s Lanka has assumed both roles according to the requirements of the work to be accomplished.

In the Sundara Kāṇḍa is depicted Hanumat’s visit to Lanka to reassure Sītā of Rāma’s impending mission to rescue her and possibly reconnoiter enemy territory. Here, he was clearly acting as a spy, secretly entering enemy territory, assuming various disguises and searching for the confined Sītā. After seeing Sītā, he contemplated visiting Rāvana as the envoy of his sovereign, Sugriva of Kiskindhā, and negotiate with him openly to secure Sītā’s release. As it was possibly not want to meet him, Hanumat purposefully courted arrest by wrecking havoc in the Asoka Kānana. Rāvana’s soldiers failed to catch Hanumat, and Indrajit, Rāvana’s son, alone succeeded and presented him before Rāvana. Undaunted,
Hanumat delivered his message of freeing Sītā to Rāvana. Furious with insult, Rāvana decided to kill him. But Vibhīṣaṇa objected, arguing that an ambassador cannot be slain according to polity that forbade death penalty to ambassadors. Thereafter, Rāvana ordered his tail to be set on fire while he was taken round the city on a cart to show all citizens the outcome of one working as a spy. During his stay in Lanka Hanuman took full stock of the situation, surveyed the citadel in all its aspects, and was convinced of its inaptness for the war.

In the events leading to the Rāma-Rāvana war in the Yuddha Kāṇḍa, spying is abundantly resorted to. As preparations for war between Rāma and Rāvana progressed, frequent assessments of comparative strength of the warring sides were required, which again depended on meticulous observations and methodical reports by spies. After being humiliated by brother Rāvana for his advice to avoid conflict with Rāma, return Sītā and other liberal views, Vibhīṣaṇa sought refuge in Rāma’s camp. But Sugriva initially suspected him to be a spy who had come to make dissension.

प्रणिधि राक्षसेनद्वस्य रावणस्य भवेदयम्।
अनुपविश्य सोप्समातु भेदं कुर्यान्तः संशयः॥ ४५
Sarabha, one of Rāma’s ministers, opined that a spy could be sent to examine Vibhīṣaṇa. But Hanumat differed saying this was humiliating for Vibhīṣaṇa. Sugriva was skeptical of Vibhīṣaṇa’s intentions and felt that he should be avoided. He may kill the main generals of Rāma after gaining their confidence. However, Rāma ultimately decided to accept Vibhīṣaṇa as he never forsook a person who prayed for shelter to him. Later on, Vibhīṣaṇa contributed significantly in supervising espionage-related activities directed towards Rāvana’s camp. Ramashraya Sharma observes that immediately after laying siege on Lanka, Rāma appointed Vibhīṣaṇa in charge of the Intelligence department and the latter by employing his personal sachivas as spies gathered information about the plans of Rāvana. He identified and exposed many spies sent by Rāvana to infiltrate and reconnoitre Rāma’s side. Practically minute to minute information of the movements of Rāvana was kept by Vibhīṣaṇa with the help of his spies.

In the chapters 20 and 21 of the Yuddha Kānda, when Rāma’s huge army was camping on the sea-shore prior to invasion of Lanka, Śardul, Rāvana’s spy, was sent to assess Rāma’s army. After inspecting Rāma’s army of monkeys and bears, Śardula returned swiftly and also suggested that Rāvana send another spy to gain
further details and avert the war. Accordingly, Rāvana sent another spy named Śuka to Śugriva to persuade him to leave Rāma and go back to Kiskindhya. Caught by Rāma’s soldiers, Śuka pleaded to Rāma that being an envoy, he should be spared. But Bāli’s son, Angad said he was a spy who had sneaked in secretly to know Rāma’s military strength. Ultimately, Śuka was pardoned and freed only due to Rāma’s boundless compassion. Hurrying back to Rāvana, Śuka described the ruthless efficiency of Rāma’s army and suggested that war with them was futile and Śītā should ideally be returned to her husband. But Rāvana’s wrath and envy had clouded his reason and overestimating his own self, said that his own army was like the sea. He then sent two fresh spies, Śuka and Sarana to go to Rāma’s camp for collection of information, who thus entered Rāma’s forces in the guise of monkeys. However, Vibhiṣaṇa recognized them and they were brought before Rāma. Consequent to their pleas for pardon, Rāma freed them but announced that their identities as spies were known to all and their efforts to create dissension amongst Rāma’s men would never be successful. On their return to Lankā, Śuka and Sarana advised Rāvana of the impossibility of victory against Rāma’s army. Not heeding to their advice, Rāvana viewed Rāma’s formidable army from his terrace.
and ordered his counsellor to present another set of spies. Mahodara, the counselor, presented a band of spies with Sārḍūla as their Team leader. Enumerating the qualities of an ideal spy, Rāvana described him as faithful, heroic, unperturbed and fearless.

तानब्रवीतले वाक्यं रावणो राक्षसाधियः।

चारान् प्रत्यायिकान् शूरान् धीरान् विगतसाध्वसान्॥ ५३

Asking them to detect all intentions and happenings in Rāma’s camp, Rāvana upheld the utility of spying, saying that learned kings could defeat the enemies with only a little endeavour, after knowing the details of the enemy with the help of spies.

चारेण विदितः शानुः पण्डितेऽवसुधाधिपः।

युज्ज्वलेष्व यजनेन सामासाध निरस्त्यते॥ ५४

Interestingly, even these guised spies, who were detected by Vibhiṣaṇa due to their different body structure, were pardoned by Rāma. Panting and terrified, they returned to divulge their spied secrets to Rāvana. Sārḍūla minutely described the number, strengths, position, divisions and chieftainship of Rāma’s army. ५५ This account speaks of his vast knowledge of military affairs even in those early stages of polity. Only after hearing Sārḍūla’s report, Rāvana called an emergency meeting to discuss matters at hand. ५६
In the thirty-seventh chapter of the Yuddha Kāṇḍa, Vibhīṣaṇa sent four spies namely Anala, Panasa, Sampati, and Pramati, who had assumed the guise of birds, to survey Rāvana’s military formations. They reported that skilled generals like Prasasta, Mahaparsva, Mahodara, Indrajit and Rāvana himself were guarding the eastern, southern, western, and northern sides of the city of Lanka, respectively, while Virupaksha was guiding the centre of the city. They also described the exact number of elephants, chariots, horses and infantry of Rāvana’s army. Such detailed and painstaking reporting speaks volumes of the commitment and discipline in espionage circuits of the contemporary age.

**Spying in the Mahābhārata**

The Mahābhārata lays great stress on the necessity and importance of the institution of spying in public administration, especially in the monarchial system. Some of the references to spying here are of a practical nature while others contain theoretical regulations.

The Śānti Parvan of The Mahābhārata (12th Parvan) deals with Rājadharmā or the duties and responsibilities of the king and his government at length. Origin of the science of polity, state and kingship, policy of taxation, spying, home administration, and
foreign policy are discussed minutely. In the 16th Chapter (Adhyāya), Bhīṣma, the revered Kaurava general, affectionately explains to the Pāṇḍavas the cream of Politics (राजधर्मानि नवनीताम्) which has been explained in the past by many great thinkers like Vṛhaspati, Viśalākṣa, Śūkra-cārya, Mahendra, Bhāradwaja etc. All these teachers have praised the protection and welfare of the subjects as the chief duty of the king. The ideal means to achieve this goal, Bhīṣma opines, is through the institution of espionage. Some other measures he suggests are due payment of salaries and remunerations to employees, impartial and punctual collection of taxes and no undue collection by king or others. He has enumerated these means of good governance in order of priority: the spy (Cara), the spy declared (Pranidhi), making payments to government servants and soldiers in time, collection of taxes according to laws and without partiality, and, no wrongful collection.

चारश्च प्रणिधिश्रेष्ठ काले दानममत्सरत् ।

युक्त्यादानं न चादानममयोगेन युधिष्ठिर ॥ ५७

Enumerating the qualities of spies, Bhīṣma says: Spies should resemble the bodily formation of an imbecile or a deaf person. They should be able to tolerate hunger, thirst and diligence. Learned and
tested, they should know secretly the behavior of all ministers, friends, sons, and other varied citizens.

It is also the duty of the spy to identify spies sent by the enemy king. So spies should search out enemy-spies at bars, wrestling grounds, society of businessmen, assemblage of beggars, city-mansions, outer-houses, courtyards, meeting-places of learned and dwellings of gentlemen. A king can ensure welfare by winning over the spies sent by the enemy king. Kings should know through spies the inner and outward intentions of his subjects living both in cities and villages and make favour or disfavour to them accordingly.
Kings should assess the behavior of the neutral, inimical and friendly kings with the help of the spies and make favour or disfavour respectively towards friendly or inimical kings.

Although occasional references to spying are seen in Ādi Parvan, Sabha Parvan, and Vana Parvan, the Virāṭa Parvan (5th Parvan) is noteworthy here because it contains a vivid example of practical application of Espionage in that ancient era. In the final year of exile, which the Pāṇḍavas had to spend successfully incognito, the anxious Duryodhana sent his spies on a massive manhunt to trace them.

Chapters 23-27 of the Virāṭa Parvan contain a graphic description of this search for the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana’s spies, having searched various villages, towns and kingdoms and done all that they had been commanded to do and completed their examination, in the manner directed, of the countries indicated in their orders, returned to the capital, but alas, with only one thing...
that they could come to know (i.e. Kicaka’s murder)! Seeing Duryodhana seated in his court with Droṇa, Karna and Kripa, Bhishma, his own brothers, and other great warriors, they addressed him, saying, 'O lord of men, bestowing great care, we searched the sons of Paṇḍu in that mighty forest. Searched have we through the solitary wilderness abounding with deer and other animals and overgrown with trees and creepers of diverse kind. Searched have we also in arbours of matted woods and plants and creepers of every species, but have failed to discover the track by which Prthas sons of irrepressible energy may have gone. Searched have we in these and other places for their foot-prints. Searched have we closely, on mountain tops and in inaccessible fastnesses, in various kingdoms and provinces teeming with people, in encampments and cities. No trace has yet been found of the sons of Paṇḍu. It seems that they have perished without leaving a mark behind. Although we followed in the track of those warriors, yet, we soon lost their footprints and do not know their present residence. For some time we followed in the wake of their charioteers. But the charioteers reached Dwaravatī without the sons of Prthas among them. We have not been able to discover either their track or their present abode. O Bharata, they seem to have disappeared completely.'
Confessing their failure to know the movements, dwelling-places, behavior and actions of the Paṇḍavas, the spies were eager to know whether they would make another attempt to search them out. One good news they could gather was that the wicked Kīcaka, King Virāṭa's commander, had been slain by invisible Gandharvas during the wee hours of darkness. Being able to convey at least this news, the spies appeared somewhat gratified.64

The dedication, thoroughness and undeterred perseverance displayed by these spies speak volumes about the quality and range of spying prevalent in those days.

Disappointed and baffled by this unexpected failure of his ace spies, Duryodhana discussed the matter with his councillors and adopted fresh strategy through his spies to hunt the Paṇḍavas down and send them back to the forest permanently. In his support, Karna too suggested that some spies in disguise, preferably spies who were clever, agreeable, expert and obedient, should renew the search with fresh vigour. He advised these spies to comb the rivers, groves, pilgrimages, villages, towns, hermitages and mountains for searching out the Paṇḍavas.

After Karna, Duhsasana rose to speak in that assembly. His novel suggestion was that the spies be given their remuneration in
advance of the mission to be undertaken, a gesture that could serve as both incentive and motivator for them. He, of course, hoped that the Pāṇḍavas might have perished in the treacherous forests in the meantime.\(^65\)

Dronācārya spoke thereafter. He opined that ordinary spies could not trace the Pāṇḍavas. The clever Pāṇḍavas could deceive them with vision and foresight alone. He, therefore, suggested that Brāhmaṇas, spies and accomplished men who knew the Pāṇḍavas well, should be deputed to search them out.\(^66\)

Bhishma arose and supported the views of Dronācārya. Kriṭacārya also seconded these views but was skeptical of their success in tracing the clever Pāṇḍavas.\(^67\) He categorically expressed that the rise of the Pāṇḍavas was inevitable at the completion of their vow of living incognito. An assessment of the military strength of the home state as well as of foreign states should therefore be made with the help of spies.\(^68\)

These five chapters of the Virāṭa Parvan, often referred to as the “Cara-Pratyācara” Adhyayas, thus showcase the practical aspect of ancient Indian spying. Its popularity and usage, the mode of operation and devotion to duty of the spies, their quality and qualifications etc quite vividly and emphatically.
The Jatu-Grha Episode in the Adi Parvan illustrates another instance of spying. The Pāṇḍavas could escape from this death-trap set up by the Kauravas only due to the presence of mind and resourcefulness of Vidura’s spy. Kanika, a minister of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, on the latter’s instructions, framed this conspiracy to kill the Pāṇḍavas. For this purpose, he suggested placement of spies in various places like the royal gardens, monasteries, temples, pubs, high ways, places of pilgrimage, courtyards, wells, mountains and forests etc. in guise of heretics, ascetics and the like.

Kanika engaged some ministers to lure the Pandavas to the majestic lac house at Varaṇavata which he, with help from Purocana, the architect, planned to set on fire after they had settled down. Vidura learnt of this heinous design from his secret agents and warned Yudhisthira in ‘Mleccha language’ before their departure. This language was known only to a few Non-Mlecchas, Vidura and Yudhisthira being among them and so they used the same so that Duryodhana’s men could not decode the message.

प्राजः: प्राजःप्रलापः प्रलापजमिदं वचः।

प्राजः: प्राजः प्रलापः प्रलापजं वचो ब्रवीत्॥ ६९
Through this use of code language, Vidura forewarned the Pāṇḍavas and also suggested possible means of escape through an underground tunnel. During their stay at Varanavata, Vidura’s spy contacted Yudhisthira secretly by using as password a shloka from the earlier used Mleccha language and informed them of the tunnel being constructed quietly and the exact date and time stipulated for the assault by Purocana. After this miraculous escape, Vidura’s spies helped the Pandavas cross the Ganges in a specially made boat. The entire Jātugriha - episode was thus engineered and manipulated by the spies of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura where the latter proved themselves as superior by some shades. Nevertheless, both sides possessed trained, shrewd agents and code language played a crucial role.

After winning Draupadi’s hand in marriage in the grand Swayamvara, the Pāṇḍavas, disguised as Brahmanas, left with their bride for their mother’s blessings. The royal Prince Dhrishtadyumna, son of Drupada and brother of Draupadi, himself followed them secretly to know more about them. He stationed his spies near the potter’s house inhabited by the Pandavas and he kept silent watch over them to find out their identity.
After receiving news of Draupadi’s marriage with the Pāṇḍavas, Duryodhana even proposed to send spies to create differences amongst the Pāṇḍavas and their in-laws. Brahmana spies could go to King Drupada with huge wealth to tempt him, his sons and ministers to either leave this alliance with the Pāṇḍavas or persuade them not to live in Hastinapura in future. He even proposed to send some Brāhmanas to secretly create dissension among the sons of Kuntī and those of Mādri. His spies also attempted gaining Yudhistira’s confidence to serve under him and secretly create misunderstandings between them. Duryodhana’s also proposed to send spies to assassinate Bhīma, the strongest Pāṇḍava, and thereby demoralize and destabilize them completely.

In the Sabha Parvan, we see Devarsi Nārada impart some invaluable advice to Yudhisthira after the Pāṇḍavas establish their capital at Indraprastha in Khandavaprastha. He enumerates the Six golden qualities of a king (Sadraajagunah), the Seven means of good governance (साम, भेद, दान, दण्ड, मन्त्र, औषध, इन्द्रजाल) and fourteen important matters related to administration. Pandit Haridasa Sidhantavagisa in his commentary opines that effective application of this advice depended on spies and emphasizes that only a king
possessing the quality of ‘eloquence (Vaktrtva)’ could instruct the spies and the ministers tactfully.

Even the application of the seven means or Sapta-upayah depended on the intelligence and presence of mind of the appointed, he states.

Again, the consideration of the strength or weaknesses of the fourteen matters related to administration depended upon judicious employment of spies, interpretes Pt. Sidhantvagisa.

The Sabha Parvan shows Narada asking Yudhisthira whether he kept information about the Eighteen Tirthas (high government officials) of enemy states and fifteen Tirthas of the home state. He suggested that Yudhisthira depute three spies to monitor each Tirtha. Not knowing one another, these spies worked unnoticed by the enemy.

Narada was particularly worried about the conduct of judges. He has enumerated many malpractices of Judges. In fact, both Narada and Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Asramavasika Parvan) advised Yudhisthira to monitor verdicts of Judges through spies to prevent
corruption due to greed or prejudice. Narada expressed his anxiety regarding such judges who could punish out of greed an innocent man after falsely declaring him as guilty. This recommendation for special vigil of the judiciary is quite pertinent and unique because no other treatise on polity, including the Arthasastra has urged on it. Such open criticism and caution against possible lapses in the judicial system is definitely commendable and thought-provoking.

In his long and valuable speech on public administration, Narada also spoke of other areas requiring the help of the institution of spies. He asked Yudhisthira to ascertain whether his ministers were loyal, whether the army commanders delivered sharp results, whether enemy was being attacked despite being famine-struck which was unethical, whether expeditions were conducted after the mandatory consultation with twelve Rajamaṇḍalas.

To prevent possible conspiracies against the king, Narada cautioned Yudhishtira to prevent the staff of the royal harem from being influenced by evil designs of the prince, enemy kings or even ministers. Spies could also report any signs of mutiny or treachery against by the subjects the king prompted by the enemy. Indeed, Narada recommended a large network of secret officers posted both in the home-state and enemy-states, helping each other in
monitoring all seditious elements. The Paitāmaha tantra, Śānti Parvan regards Spies as an important constituent of the army of the land.

The Vana Parvan contains the touching legend of Nala and Damayanti where the spies are very active. When King Nala was defeated by King Puśkara in a game of dice and lost all his possessions, the latter set his spies in every nook and corner of his kingdom to see that his subjects might not give shelter to Nala. Nala was then compelled to go to a forest with his queen, Damayanti, the Vidarbha princess. Havig learnt of these happenings through his spies, Bhima sent is spies in all directions to search them out. After prolonged search, a Brāhmaṇa named Suvāhu achieved success. Reaching the kingdom of Suvāhu, he saw Damayanti serving as a female attendant. Nala, on the other hand, had disguised himself as a charioteer named Vahuka and was serving King Ritupārṇa of Kosāla. Bhīma had this report only due to his tireless spies. When Ritupārṇa came to the kingdom of bhima with Vāhuka, Damayanti identified him through the female informer Kesini.

The Drona Parvan elaborately outlines the hectic gathering of information by spies during the Great Kuruksetra War. The terrible uproar following Arjuna's vow to slay Jayadrata, Abhimanyu's
slayer, before sunset led to hasty maneuvers of spies on both sides to anticipate the exact strategy of the opponents.\textsuperscript{80} Krśna's spies reported to the Pāṇḍavas, in about twenty odd verses, the iron-like strategic line of defense set up by the Kauravas for protecting Jayadratha from Arjuna's wrath. This report from the spies helped Krśna and Arjuna know the enemy's game-plan well ahead of actual action. Spying thus helped the Pāṇḍavas at a very crucial point of the Great War. Indeed, it is possible that the Pāṇḍavas, with their lesser number of arms or soldiers, could win the war against the formidable Kauravas mainly due to their excellent spying system.

Even knowledge of toxicology and alchemy may have played a significant role here. The conversation between Indra and Vṛhaspati in the Sānti Parvan, mentions secret use of toxins by the Pandavas to render enemy-soldiers invalid.\textsuperscript{81}

In the Āśramavāsika Parvan of the Mahabharata, king Dṛtarāṣṭra, just before taking refuge in Vanaprastha, gave some valuable advice on polity to Yudhīṣṭhīra. He spoke at length about spies and statecraft. Two interesting prerequisites to the appointment of spies as laid down by him were a) Spies must be examined both physically and psychologically before their appointment) must be the citizens of the home-state.\textsuperscript{82}
The political theories of the great thinker, Bhāradvāja forms a significant part of the Mahābhārata. The Bhāradvāja Nīti (Chapter 126-167 of the Śānti Parvan) contains valuable discourses imparted to king Satrunjayan of Saubira, about the ways of acquiring, sustaining and increasing a kingdom. In this connection, Bhāradvāja described the use of spies by the Vijigīṣu king. He has also mentioned the five spies: Kapaṭika, Udāsthita, Grḥapatika, Vaidehaka and Tapasa but Kauṭīlya’s enumeration is more elaborate and organized. Indeed, many of Kauṭīlya’s political views on espionage evolved from the seeds of polity sown by the Mahābhārata.

Espionage in the Puranas

The Purāṇas which contain valuable information on many realistic aspects of human life are quite eloquent on the principles of law enforcement and intelligence.

The Agni Purāṇa deals with various aspects of statecraft and contains a significant reference to spying. The king should observe the world through his spies and always acknowledge their contribution to public welfare. The Caradhyarksha is an integral part of staecraft and indispensible to the king.

चारक्षुर्भवेद्वा विभूषीत सदा चरान् ।

96
The Agni Purāṇa does not markedly differentiate the role of the envoy from that of the spy. An ambassador is but an open spy, and a spy is but an envoy roaming about in the enemy country in the guise of a trader, a mendicant or a strolling physician.

The qualifications and varieties of envoys are presented elaborately in the Agnipurāṇa. A man, intelligent, well-versed in the arts of war and scriptural knowledge, accustomed to the work of espionage, possessing a good retentive memory and eloquence of speech, should be appointed as an ambassador.

The ancient authorities on the science of politics recognize three varieties of envoys. The Nīrṣṭārtha is an envoy entrusted with the management of an affair according to his own light and discretion. The Mitārtha is the envoy charged with the execution of a
mission according to the directions received from his sovereign. The Sasanaharaka is the envoy whose duty is to deliver the decision of his master on a particular question, each preceding class being less limited in authority than the class immediately following it.

The house of an envoy should not be entered into, nor should an interview be asked for without being previously acquainted with the ins and outs of his mansion and his own secret counsels.

A king or an envoy should bide his time and ascertain the right time of action and then fall on the enemy or assume his true character at the opportune moment.

The Agni Purana advises the king that the weak point of the enemy should be ascertained, the state of his treasure, army and allies should be accurately enquired into and his personal likes and
dislikes should be gathered from his looks and gestures. While in an enemy country, an envoy should eulogize both his master and his adversary, so that he might judge the true state of public feelings and ascertain the probable number of allies his sovereign might get in a country in the event of a war. He should live with his spies, disguised as mendicants, etc. A king should march against his adversary in the event of an act of unsuccessful embassy in the latter’s court when he would find him overwhelmed with troubles and dangers. A king should fall upon his antagonist in the event of civic disturbances in his country and of a rebellion by his subjects.

The Matsya Purana enumerates the qualifications of an ideal spy thus: A king’s spy should be conscientious enough to submit true and accurate reports, obedient to the king’s injunctions, have a
knowledge of dialects of many countries, be able to speak fluently and put up with rough life, of quiet disposition and capable of discharging his duties adequately according to the circumstances.

A king should secretly depute four spies in his country as well as in foreign countries to work out the policy of divide and rule. They should be intelligent, learned, and free from avarice, able to put up with hardships, incapable of being recognized by others, simple in habits, able to mix with people, skilled in commerce or medicine. He should not pin his faith in one spy alone. The spies must recognize each other and be of gentle manners.

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The spies should roam in the garb of mendicants, ministers, astrologers, physicians or Sannyasis. When at least two of such spies corroborate each other, the king should act accordingly. If they contradict each other, then spies of more superior talents should be deputed to find out which of his actions are appreciated by his people as well as the causes of their dissatisfaction. The spies should be checked in return. He should then abandon for good what may be against the wishes of the people.

The Kālika Purāṇa contains significant content in this regard. The king is advised to deploy eight kinds of spies in eight
important matters related to administration. These eight places or Aṣṭavarga are: i) the agricultural land ii) the fort iii) commercial complex iv) farm for tilling crops like paddy etc v) Offices for collection of taxes vi) places for recruitment of soldiers vii) Barren lands for rehabilitation of subjects and viii) the site of construction of dams.

Spies must collect information about five of the seven elements of state (angas): the ruler, the ministers, the territory and its population, friends and allies, the treasury, the army and the capital or fortified city. Of these, spying against the king himself is not possible and spying in forts is already included in ‘Aṣṭavarga’.

Five other places to be spied upon are: the inner apartments of the palace, the princes, articles for royal consumption like garlands and soup, the royal kitchen, the assessment of strength and weakness of an inimical or indifferent state. Following the detected merits and loop-holes, the king should punish the guilty or promote the guiltless. Accompanied by his prime minister, the king should learn secret news from the spy in the evening, Regarding Princes, harem, kitchen and ministers, he should ask only at midnight while not assisted by any minister.
Qualifications of an ideal spy should be: Expert in disguises, married with children, adept in languages, capable of assessing intentions of others, loyal, fearless and bodily fit. Those unfit to be recruited as spies are: wearer of one sole dress, devoid of enthusiasm, known everywhere, too tall, too short, and always working at day, full of disease, too dimwitted, devoid of money, devoid of wife or son.

In the inner apartments, elderly, calm, fatherly males or wise, weathered, intelligent, learned elderly ladies should be appointed.

Espionage in Ancient Buddhist Literature

The latter part of the sixth century B.C. saw the rise of new religious movements in the political backdrop of the Sixteen Mahajanapadas of which the most important were Jainism and Buddhism. Both the early Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya and Jaina text Bhagavati Sutra mention the names and jurisdictions of these republics with minor variations. Many of these republics were engaged in struggle for supremacy and their military campaigns necessitated organized espionage systems. Even different religious
orders used spies to appease the political entities who patronized them. The Mahājanaka Jātaka mentions the vast machinery of espionage present in King Prasenjit’s kingdom at Kosala. The Jataka literature refers to the secret agents as Upanikkhittapurisas. They convey the impression that a regular spying network was operational in these small but powerful kingdoms. They would methodically observe and report to the kings they were serving, the military preparations as well as the evil designs of foreign rulers. On the basis of these reports, the kings would decide their line of action to counter-act the enemy’s movements. In the Maha Ummagga Jataka, we hear of a spy who despatched an important report from a distant kingdom. Another Jataka tale, the Gandatindu Jataka, informs us how the secret agents of a king in Kampilla, even while at war, out-manoeuvred the enemies to enter the city of Mithila by its postern gate and successfully conveyed all sorts of useful news about the enemy to their master. Spies were also assigned the work of thwarting the enemy’s plans by creating a breach of trust between the latter and their army. It outlines the tyranny of some ministers and officials who harassed the subjects by overtaxing them while ignoring notorious thieves and dacoits. Having learnt this, the king and his priest went out in disguise to see for themselves, and
restored peace and order in the realm. Thus, the king himself acted as spy sometimes. Brahmadatta, the ruler of Kashi, anxious to know the defects of his administration, if any, wandered in disguise in cities, villages and even the Himalayan region.95

The PratijñaYaugandharayana, a fifth-century B.C play of Bhāsa, mentions the espionage system active during the reign of Udayana or Udena, son of Vaidehiputra, a contemporary of the Buddha. With the help of his minister Yaugandharayana and his skiled spies, Udayana could successfully elope with and wed Vasavadutta, the daughter of Mahasena, the king of Avanti and an enemy of Udayana. Through his spies, Yaugandharayana came to know beforehand about Mahāsena’s conspiracy to capture Udayana while on a hunting expedition and forewarned him. Mahasena still managed to capture Udayana. Yaugandharayana and minister Rumanvan disguised as a lunatic and a beggar respectively, sneaked into Ujjain, capital of Avanti. Through spies using symbolic code language, they could contact Udayana. Even Vasavadutta attendant was a female spy planted by them. When Vasavadutta and Udayana were fleeing, Yaugandharayana’s spies engaged Mahasena in a fierce battle so that he might not chase Udayana.
Lord Buddha himself upholds espionage as an essential adjunct of administration in his sermon, thus: The king should base his daily life upon the single principle (ekadhammo) of watchfulness (apamado) for he would thereby keep himself active, wakeful and guarded along with the family members and vassal kings and would guard and protect his treasure and store-house.⁹⁶

Espionage in Manusāṁhitā

The Manusāṁhitā is a comprehensive text on polity which discusses Rajadharmā or the duties of the king elaborately. Here, he has commented on the utility of spying and ideal mode of working of spies.

Manu enumerates the functions of an ambassador in detail. Although he does not specify, the mode of working of the ambassador suggests the character of the ‘declared spy’ (prakasacara). Manu writes that friendship or enmity with a foreign state depends entirely on the ambassador.

The ambassador is responsible for unity or alienation of kings. He transacts the business by which men are disunited. After entering a foreign state, an ambassador should observe the acts and deeds of the king of that state and should try to guess the rival king’s attitude
through his gestures, postures, and behaviour towards his servants. After knowing the intentions of the rival king, an ambassador should take the appropriate measures so that the interest of his own state is not harmed.

A king intending victory (Vijigiśu) must know the weaknesses of his enemy but his enemy must not know his weaknesses. Only spies can accomplish this feat. Manu recommends a Superintendent to closely oversee the activities of all lower officials through his spies.

Government servants appropriate money and property. Subjects should be protected from them. The king should
carefully perform these eight duties: i) sending ambassadors ii) completion of projects undertaking iii) knowing the behavior of women in the seraglio iv) supervising the working of spies v) supervision of eightfold works vi) knowing about the five types vii) monitoring the loyalty and hostility of the subjects and observing the circle of neighbouring kings.

The word ‘Pañcavarga’ according to commentarian Kullūka, refers to the five classes of spies; Kapatika, Udasthita, Grhapatika, Vaidehaka and Kapatika. Kautilya has outlined the characteristics, mode of working and the subsistence of these five classes of spies in an elaborate and more emphatic manner. For the king intending to lay siege on an enemy, Manu recommends creating troubles for the rival king, like contaminating their grass, water, food or fuel. Destroying the reservoirs, ramparts, moats and night-raids are also suggested. All this can be executed only by spies. Kautilya has discussed these guerilla tactics of spies in minute
detail and even incorporated innovative designs. Manu has suggested that the king should meet his appointed spies once every evening to discuss strategy and methodology. The king should be well-armed and the deliberations should take place in an inner apartment.\textsuperscript{102} Kautilya lays down at least three such appointments in a day of counseling between the spies and their recruiters. Before embarking on a military offensive, the Vijigisu should make proper arrangements for carrying on his normal duties. He should arrange provisions, should engineer dissensions among officials of inimical states, collect information to aid subversion through spies, make the path of the expedition passable and equip his army properly and so on.

Theives are two-fold. Prakasa (Known) thieves are those who charge more than genuine prices or manipulate during weighing. Aprakasa (unknown) are those who burglarize others wealth or property remaining in their hide-outs. Manu recommends that for gathering information about and apprehending such thieves, the king should appoint spies from those who were erstwhile thieves, aids to thieves or followers of thieves or burglars.\textsuperscript{103} For ascertaining the strength of the enemy as well as of his own self, Manu mentions
three methods i) appointment of own spies ii) encouragement of own army and iii) performance of duties.

Kauṭšila has discussed elaborately the role of spies in encouraging the army. Manu propagated the theory of Divine origin of the king. The king should enter with the help of his spies everywhere in his own state as well as in foreign states just like the wind enters into every being.

The Astadhyaīyī of Pāṇini mentions ‘Upaniṣat’ as secret agent employed by the king and ‘aupanisadaka’ as an agent who makes his living by secret means. Panini also mentions ‘Visenavadhyah’ (a person to be poisoned). Use of poison as a murder-weapon especially by women spies gained acceptability during Kauṭšila.

Espionage in the Śukranitiṣāra

Śukrācārya has also expressed his views on espionage in his treatise, Śukranitiṣāra. Although he devotes only few verses on
spying, he is quite emphatic on the necessity of a well-organized spying network for the smooth working of the kingdom. He defines the spy (गूढचारा:) as one who is adept in knowing the behavior of enemies, subjects and the public servants and conveying factual information (not fabrications) to his king.

Sukrachārya advises the king to earnestly ascertain, through his spies, all the gestures and activities of ministers, courtiers, soldiers, friends and ladies residing in the inner apartments along with those of enemies, subjects and public servants and also write them diligently. This counsel of writing down all reports of the spies is a unique technique probably aimed at future authentication and chronicling. These meeting with spies should be held only at night (to ensure top secrecy), with full alertness and armed guard.

सङ्घानां बान्धवानां च स्त्रीणामन्त:पुरे च यत् ॥
श्रणुयाद् गूढचारेभ्यो निम्नि चात्यथौ च सदा ॥
सावधानमना: सिद्धश्रास्त्र: संल्पिखेच्य तत्।
असत्वाविदिं गूढचारं नैव च ज्ञास्ति यः ॥ १०७
Sukracarya is particularly disapproving of spies who present false or contrived reports. He brands the king who fails to detect or punish a liar amongst spies as a ‘Mleccha’ or an element harmful to public life and property.

Sūkra is particularly disapproving of spies who present false or contrived reports. He brands the king who fails to detect or punish a liar amongst spies as a ‘Mleccha’ or an element harmful to public life and property.

A king should adopt means to investigate, either openly or tactfully, the truth behind reports submitted by spies who assume different disguises of celibate pupil, ascetic, Sage, fraud or soothsayer and so on.

Without testing the integrity of the spies, the king can never adjudge the actual happenings and act accordingly. Moreover, a king who is not in the habit of verifying these reports is liable to be fed false news by any spy. Simultaneously, the king should also guard the spy from vengeful attacks of ministers or officials (especially those who have been adversely reported against by the spy.)
While enumerating the protection, care and functions of the Crown Prince and other state officials, Sukracārya emphasizes the value of spying in statecraft. He cautions that the ruler should very carefully protect the royal children, who even though virtuous, can be tempted or misguided to destroy the ruler. Young and inexperienced, they are like infuriated elephants without drivers who kill even their protectors like lion-cubs kill an elephant. Hence, great caution and diplomacy is required in dealing with them.

For constant watch should be kept over them. Keeping them near him, the king, remaining impartial, should know their minds through craft and eradicate any disloyal or jealous feelings out of their minds.

He also suggests categorically that, in the interest of the state, relatives and kinsfolk, who are of evil disposition, should be meticulously extirpated through tigers, enemies or through craft.
All these activities must have necessitated the services of skilled spies.

Espionage in the Yajnavalkyasmrti

The Yajnavalkyasamhita of sage Yajnavalkya is another important Dharmasastra of our ancient land. He too has upheld the significance of spying in public administration.

The king should assess the performance of spies by meeting them thrice daily, at noon, in the evening and in the dead hours of the night.

Yajnavalkya states explicitly that the king should know through his spies the movements of the persons connected with state affairs, meaning government officials. After knowing about their behavior, the king should honour the honest officials and eliminate the dishonest ones. Having deprived the bribe-takers of their possessions, he should banish them, and should, always, settle the Srotriyas with honour, gifts and good treatment.
Clearly, most Ancient Indian texts even before Kautilya’s Arthasastra contained quite pervasive and penetrating thoughts on the subject and emphatically show that no other civilization can claim such an antiquity for deliberations on polity, war, diplomacy and espionage. These perspicacious and erudite political thinkers have earnestly and assiduously urged that the success of all governments depends on their effective implementation of the ‘rule of law’ which in turn depends on the performance of the ‘Secret Services’. Undoubtedly, India had a distinguished lineage of statesmen, administrators, jurists and political philosophers who acknowledged the need for organized espionage in statecraft, the lion’s share of contribution in systematically codifying and presenting the science and art of Espionage to the world was made by Kautilya. Realizing the imperative need for security, integrity and peace before an individual or a state can possess and enjoy material wealth; Kautilya set himself the goal of reinforcing and streamlining the existing approach towards Espionage for making it a strong instrument of ensuring social, economic and political order. Whenever states
neglected the basic requirements of good governance, i.e. collection and collation of intelligence on the aims, objectives and programmes of their adversaries and failed to take corrective measures, the regime lost its ascendancy and fell to rebellions and foreign invaders. The fearless king, Porus of Punjab, in spite of his mighty forces and heroic patriotism, failed to stop the Macedonian invasion (326 B.C). When Porus could not be defeated in direct battle, Alexander adopted a clever stratagem. Concealing his moves and intentions, he made his army move up and down the river in search of a convenient and secret point for fording. He crossed the mighty Jhelum in the wee hours of the morning after a night of torrential rain and thunder at a point seventeen miles up the river from the base camp, unnoticed by his opponent. Hiding his bridge of boats behind a thickly forested island, he took Porus by surprise and overpowered him. Had the spies of Porus anticipated or detected his stratagem, history would have accorded Porus a standing ovation. Kautilya must surely have drawn heavily on the experiences of Porus and resolved to build a foolproof security network committed to consolidation of a strong empire.
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3 Ibid, X, 127

4 AV, XIX, 47, 3.

5 RV, IV, 4, 3.

6 RV, VII, 61,3

7 Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index of Names and Subjects, Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass,1982, p 213.

8 RV, VIII. 47, 11

9 Ibid, X, 22, 8

10 Ibid, X, 38, 3

11 Ibid, X, 108, 5

12 Ibid, X, 108, 7

13 Ibid, I, 25, 7-11 and ibid, VII, 61, 5

14 Ibid, I, 25, 5 and 16

15 Ibid, VII, 34, 10

16 Ibid, VI, 67, 5
"Ibid, VIII, 61,15

Ibid, IV, 13, 3

Ibid, I, 50, 6

Ibid, IX, 73, 4

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Ibid, VII, 87, 3

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Jataka VI. 528

AV.IV.16.4

Ibid, IV, 16, 5.

Ibid, IV, 16, 6-7

Ibid, V.6.3


RV, I, 12,1 and RV, VIII, 44, 3 invoke Agni, the Fire-God to act as mediator or messenger between men and Gods.

TS, IV,7,1


अथ श्रो भूते पालागलस्य गृहान्यपरेत्य चतुर्ग्रहीततमात्य गृहित्वा धन आज्ञ जुहोति शुष्क्तिझड्वां ज्ञेयाः वेद श्वाहेति प्रहेदी वे पालागलोध्वां वे प्रहित

Ram, II,100,36

KA, I.12.

Ram,II,Chap100, Sl. 65-70

KA I, Chap 13 and 14

Ram, III, Chap 33, Sl.11

Ibid, III, 37. 3


Ibid, IV, Chap2, Sl 5, 6; Chap3.Sl. 2

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Ibid, VI, Chap 82, 6, 9-15
52 Ibid, VI, Chap 25, Sl 33
53 Ibid, VI, Chap 29, Sl 18
54 Ibid, VI, Chap 29, Sl 21
55 Ibid, VI, Chap 30, Sl 20-30
56 Ibid, VI, Chap 31, Sl 2,3
57 Mbh, XII, Chap 16, Sl 2
58 Mbh, XII, Chap 19, Sl 8, 9
59 Ibid, XII, Chap 19, Sl 11, 12?
60 Ibid, XII, Chap 19, Sl 13
61 Ibid, XII, Chap 26, Sl 14
62 Ibid, XII, Chap 26, Sl 15
63 Ibid, IV, Chap 23, Sl 05
64 Ibid, IV, Chap 23, Sl 05-21.
65 Ibid, Chap 24, Sl 01-17
67 Ibid, Chap 26, Sl 30.
68 Ibid, Chap 27, Sl 5,6
69 Ibid, I, Chap 139, Sl 20
70 Ibid, I, Chap CLXLIV.
71 Ibid, Chap 194, Sl.4-12.

72 H Sidhantvagisa, Bharatbhavadipa commentary on Mahabharata.

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75 Mbh,II, Chap 5, Sl 38.

76 Ibid, II, Chap 5, Sl 105-107

77 Ibid, II, Chap 5

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79 Ibid, XII, Chap 58, Sl 41

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81 Ibid, XII, Chap 10, Sl 15-17

82 Ibid, II, Chap 7, Sl 8,15,20,27

83 AP, Chap 220, Sl 20

84 AP, Chap 221.3

85 AP, Chap 241, Sl No 11, 12

86 Ibid, Chap 241, Sl No 7

87 Ibid, Chap 241, Sl No 8

88 Ibid, Chap 241, Sl No 9

89 Ibid, Chap 241, Sl No 10

90 Ibid, Chap 241, Sl No 11,13,14
91 MP, Chap 215, Sl 12,13

92 Ibid, Chap 215, Sl 92-98

93 Ka. Pu, Chap 84, Sl 58-74


95 JG (Vol I-VI), Ghosh I C.


97 MS, Chap VII, 65

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99 Ibid, Chap VII, 122

100 Ibid, Chap VII, 123

101 Ibid, Chap VII, Sl.154

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108 Ibid, I. Sl. No.338

109 Ibid, I. Sl. No.339

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111 Ibid, Chap II, 19,


113 Ibid, Sl No 28.

114 YS, Sl No.338, 339